

February 19, 2016

Appropriation Committee Co-Chairs
Senator Beth Bye and Representative Toni Walker

Re: House Bill No. 5044 AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES FOR
THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2017

Dear Co-Chairs Bye and Walker,

I write in support of the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC), which is a vital public entity that is essential to ensuring the rights of our state's growing Latino community. The proposed funding bill no. 5044 would have devastating consequences for this critical advocate for our state's vibrant Latino population. I am writing this as an educator and in my role as the co-chair of the sub-committee for English Language Learners (PA 11-85, Master Plan to Eliminate the Achievement Gap). Districts and schools across the state are mandated to ensure that English Language Learners (ELLs) receive specialized services to meet their language and academic needs per the United States Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Connecticut bilingual statutes. LPRAC was instrumental in supporting and providing the committee with the understanding of the legislative process to ensure that bilingual education in Connecticut meets the needs of our students and to advocate for additional or additive programs that can benefit all our students.

According to October 2014 data (provided by DOE), there are 34,851 ELL students in 173 Local Education Agencies, of which 9,904 are receiving bilingual support and 5,536 are receiving Language Transition Support Services. These students represent 6.4% of Connecticut's student population. LPRAC's work is critical to the future of these students

Gladys Labas, Ph.D.